

## FAIRTRADE STATUS FOR THE BOROUGH

**Submitted by:** Hilary Jones, Chair, Newcastle Fairtrade Group  
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**Portfolio:** Cuts across most Cabinet Portfolios but predominantly focussed around Regeneration and Planning – Councillor Robin Studd

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to update Councillors regarding the impact of the newly acquired Fairtrade status for the Borough.

### **Recommendations**

(a) That the Council celebrates the achievement of Fairtrade status for the Borough and encourages support for the celebratory event planned for June

(b) That the Council continues to provide active support for the Fair Trade Group in its efforts to maintain its status and to increase the level of awareness for Fairtrade products and fair trade in general within the Borough

The principal officer to further the interest of fair trade within the Council is the Business Development Officer

### **Reasons**

(a) Achievement of Fairtrade status is something which the Borough can be proud of and can be used as a promotional tool. There are dedicated images which can only be used once status has been achieved (*see the end of the report*). The Borough has printed some of the larger image for distribution to retail and café outlets. The other image could be used in other publications or on street signs.

(b) Continued Council support is vital since the first renewal application is due within 1 year of being obtained (i.e. by 6 February 2013) and every 2 years thereafter.

## 1. **Background**

1.1 As reported to the Council at the meeting of 22 February 2012, the Council resolved on 26 October 2005 to support Fairtrade and wished to apply officially to become a Fairtrade Borough. A Steering Group was constituted in March 2006 to operate independently of the Council.

1.2 An unsuccessful application for Fairtrade status was made in January 2007, although Goals 1, 4 & 5 were achieved at that stage.

***Goal 1: Local council passes a resolution supporting Fairtrade. The resolution should include a commitment to serve Fairtrade\* tea and coffee at its meetings and in its offices and canteens whenever hot drinks are served***

**Goal 4: Attract media coverage and popular support for the campaign**

**Goal 5: A local Fairtrade steering group is convened to ensure continued commitment to its Fairtrade Town status.** This should ideally include a council representative, campaigners, and people representing the area's schools, churches and businesses. The group is responsible for an annual assessment to monitor whether the area is continuing to meet the five goals. The group organises special events for Fairtrade Fortnight in March each year.

1.3 **Goals 2 & 3** were not achieved at that stage:

**Goal 2:** A range of (at least two) Fairtrade products are readily available in the area's shops and are served in local cafés/catering establishments. With a population of 122,000 Newcastle-under-Lyme requires 25 retail outlets and 13 catering outlets selling 2 or more products with the FAIRTRADE Mark.

**Goal 3: Fairtrade products are used by an appropriate number of local work places (offices, shops, B&Bs etc.) and community organisations (faith communities, schools, universities etc).** For larger populations (over 100,000) a flagship employer is expected as well as the local authority listed under Goal 1.

1.4 The Council resolved at its meeting on 28 October 2009 to 'provide support for the Fair Trade Group both in its application for Fairtrade Borough status and with its ongoing activity'. A renewed application was submitted in August 2011 and the Fairtrade Borough was obtained as of 6 February 2012.

N.B: The certificate received from the Fairtrade Foundation is in the name of the Borough and not Town. Fairtrade Town appears to be the norm. Fairtrade Borough is appropriate in our context, particularly since retail and catering outlets within Kidsgrove have been included in the application.

2. **Issues**

2.1 Having now gained Fairtrade Borough status, the Fair Trade Group is keen that it is maintained. There are a number of difficulties but also encouraging factors. The effect of the current economic climate may be detrimental where suppliers may decide to opt out of Fairtrade products because of the cost implication and some outlets may close.

2.2 The Fairtrade Foundation has tightened the requirements for two of the goals as follows:

**Goal 2.** *The wording has changed from:*

*'A range of (at least 2) Fairtrade products are readily available in the area's shops and are served in local cafés/catering establishments' to:*

*'At least 4 Fairtrade product ranges are readily available in the area's retail outlets (shops, supermarkets, newsagents, petrol stations) and 2 products served in local catering outlets (cafes, restaurants, pubs)'*

2.3 30 retail outlets and 18 café outlets were included in the latest application which is a little above the minimum but with the tightened requirements there is concern that it may not be possible to maintain the required number and particularly for catering outlets.

2.4 The Borough has not benefited to the same extent as other places from national chains, although it is also evident that some have now opted for Rainforest Alliance or Soil

Association certified products rather than Fairtrade (e.g. Costa Coffee). However, it is very encouraging that all the tea, coffee and drinking chocolate sold in the café in the new Sainsbury's store is Fairtrade and also the Starbucks café in Newcastle College.

2.5 Nevertheless, there are a number of retail outlets which have less than 4 Fairtrade products and some catering outlets which only have 1 and so there is much work to be done. Café proprietors have been supplied with a directory of local wholesale suppliers and a list of 300 signatures of shoppers (obtained in Oct 2009) wanting to see Fairtrade beverages and snacks being served. Personal approaches have also been made at regular intervals. A buying Guide of Fairtrade outlets within the Borough has been produced and updated at regular intervals since 2006. Funding has been obtained from The Co-operative Membership Fund for a glossy A3 leaflet due to be produced shortly in conjunction with the Council.

2.6 **Goal 3:** The wording has changed from:

'Fairtrade products are used by an appropriate number of local work places (offices, shops, B&Bs etc.) and community organisations (faith communities, schools, universities etc). For larger populations (over 100,000) a flagship employer is expected as well as the local authority listed under Goal 1' to:

'Local work places and community organisations (places of worship, schools, universities, colleges and other community organisations) support Fairtrade and use Fairtrade products wherever possible. Populations over 100,000 will also need a flagship employer.'

2.7 The wording does not appear to be significantly different but it is not now possible to include an employer whose activity is counted under other goals. i.e. it has to be a workplace other than a university or college. **Keele University** was the flagship employer in our current application but this will NOT be acceptable for the renewal.

2.8 An alternative flagship employer is currently being sought and the Group is optimistic that a replacement will be found. Nevertheless the group is also conscious that the known take-up from other businesses is still minimal. Most of the workplaces included in the latest list are small operators and it is important to try and get some larger businesses on board. This is an area where the Group considers that further Council input would help (see under 2.2.5).

2.9 The Fair Trade Group considers that it is imperative to maintain and improve the level of Council support (both in terms of personnel and finance) in order to retain the status achieved.

2.10 Councillors will be interested in the feedback provided by the Fairtrade Foundation to the 2007 application, when **Goal 1** of the status (*see under 1 above*) was achieved:

'Congratulations, this goal is met. We congratulate the Council for the commitment they have made to Fairtrade and are pleased to see that this commitment is already having practical implications on Council policy regarding tea and coffee. We look forward to seeing how they develop on the commitment made and to seeing the range of Fairtrade products made available at meetings and in offices increase. We also welcome the link the Council has made between a fair deal for producers overseas and a fair deal for local producers.'

It is great that the Steering Group has such obvious support from the Council and we hope that this will assist the group in their future activities. Could the Council support the local Fairtrade Campaign by helping to produce promotional materials for example or by including information about local Fairtrade activities on their website? We welcome the commitment given by the Council and look forward to seeing how they develop upon it!

- 2.11 The following additional comment was added to the feedback to the latest application:
- 2.11.1 'A new [guide to Fairtrade and Local Authorities](#) has recently been produced containing ideas that you may find useful. Many of these illustrate the role councils can and do play in increasing understanding and support through using their unique position, contacts and leadership. Click the above link or visit [www.fairtrade.org.uk/towns](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/towns) to download. We welcome the commitment given by the Council and look forward to seeing how they develop upon this'.
- 2.12 Officer involvement - Following representation from the Steering Group in 2008 some Council support was forthcoming, which the Group was able to include in the following latest application:
- Provision of an officer with a Fairtrade remit ( Business Development Officer).
  - Provision of Fairtrade information on the Borough web-site (within the Business section).
  - Provision of a dedicated e-mail address (currently linked to a councillor's e-mail).
  - Inclusion of Fairtrade in the Eco Schools programme promoted within the Borough (it is not known whether this still applies).
- 2.13 Assistance with media coverage (**Goal 4**) - There is about the level of **media** support which a Council provides. The Group considers that the level of media coverage is greater if it has Council backing. It is important that **Goal 4** of the requirements continue to be met:
- Goal 4: Attract media coverage and popular support for the campaign.*** For the press, the story can be revived as each goal is achieved, organising a big splash for the Fairtrade declaration ceremony, and developing a strategy to keep it in the news long after. This will also enable local businesses and organisations to benefit from their involvement.
- 2.13.1 It is also undoubtedly true that promotion of the cotton bunting challenge during Fairtrade Fortnight 2011 by the Communications Department (with a press release under the Council umbrella) helped in the promotion of the event and the Fairtrade Foundation were obviously impressed with the amount of media coverage received both for this and the visit of the shea butter producer from Ghana on the first day of the Fortnight.
- 2.13.2 The last main feature in the Reporter was in 2005. The group would welcome more coverage of Fairtrade events in the Reporter.
- 2.13.3 Coverage in the press this year has been poor with only a couple of brief references in the 'In Brief' sections of the Sentinel. However, there were 3 radio interviews.
- 2.14 Steering Group membership - The other key area requiring Council support is within the Steering Group itself. An active Steering Group is one of the essential requirements (**Goal 5**) and the new **Goal 1** states that there must be a **named Council representative (member or officer) on the Steering Group**. Recommended officers are Local Agenda 21 or Sustainability officers.
- 2.14.1 At the moment no councillors or officers attend the group. For the latest application the Group felt that it was only able to list the **support** of 3 named councillors.
- 2.14.2 Despite its small size (currently only 10 active members) the Group feels that it has raised awareness of Fairtrade considerably, particularly bearing in mind that they are all volunteers.

There has been a significant increase in the level of commitment in schools, helped also by the inclusion of Fairtrade in the primary curriculum.

- 2.15 Fairtrade Workplaces - As indicated under 2.2 above there is a need to increase the level of take-up in workplaces within the Borough. It is possible that workplaces are using Fairtrade products but attempts to obtain this information have not been particularly successful. Fairtrade business breakfasts have been suggested but not yet taken up. It may be that business initiatives can be undertaken in conjunction with neighbouring Fairtrade areas. See 2.16 below.
- 2.16 Working with other groups - **Goal 5 (the work of the Steering Group)** now requires a commitment to work together with other Fairtrade groups – to co-ordinate activity, pool opportunities and scale up activity in the region as a whole. Links have already been made with the Stoke-on-Trent group and the principal Fair Trade shop in Hanley has been featured in the Newcastle Buying Guide since its inception. It is this shop which has provided produce for sale at various events organised by the Group within the Borough. Members of the group attended a meeting of the Stoke Steering Group in November and our success as a Fairtrade Borough was also acknowledged at the Lord Mayor's Civic Reception during Fairtrade Fortnight. A meeting to discuss ideas for links with businesses etc. is planned for May.
- 2.17 At the time of reporting in 2009, Stoke City Council provided the following support to its own Fairtrade Steering Group:
  - publication of the City's Fairtrade Directory
  - ensuring that Fairtrade products are used for school meals wherever possible and special Fairtrade menus are devised during Fairtrade Fortnight (*but not valid for Newcastle*)
  - Active involvement by the City Centre Manger in encouraging businesses to support Fairtrade and to include articles in the quarterly City Centre magazine.
  - hosting a Fairtrade producer during Fairtrade Fortnight
  - hosting a Civic reception during Fairtrade Fortnight
  - production of pop-up banners

However, it is fair to say that the Newcastle Fair Trade Group considers that it has probably raised the awareness of a broader section of the population by the simple stalls which it has run in the town centre and other locations during Fairtrade Fortnight and at other times of the year.

### 3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 As well as celebrating what has been achieved, the recommendations are to encourage the Council to actively support the Fair Trade Group in its work. The proposals therefore will help the group to maintain and improve upon the status that has now been reached and thereby play its part in the development of trade in the Borough.

### 4. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The group has had to rely to date for funding from the following sources:
  - An initial donation by the Co-operative (of goods translated into cash) of c. £200.
  - Co-operative grants for banners and urn and flask (used for provision of hot drinks).

- Profits made on sale of drinks at various events. N.B. No profit is made from the sale of other FT produce, since it is provided on a sale or return basis with marked prices.
- Some funding (c. £300) is still available for production of the glossy A3 leaflet and it is hoped that the Council will cover the bill for the graphic design and print costs. It is intended that this will feature 'Shop Local' features as well as Fairtrade.
- Additional funding would be welcome, particularly to cover the cost of the planned celebratory event. It will be difficult for the Group to fund it from its own resources.

## 5. **Major Risks**

- 5.1 Without continued Council support, there is the risk that the Fair Trade status will be lost.

### **Dedicated Fairtrade Borough Images**

